

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 OMB-01 SAB-01 SCCT-01 A-01

SY-05 OPR-02 SCS-03 SCA-01 OC-05 CCO-00 EB-07 COME-00

AGR-05 FEAE-00 OES-03 TRSE-00 /113 W

----- 006816

O P 261335Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6404

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

ZDN/USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 2969

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICEURLANT NORFLOK VA

DIA WASHDC

CIA WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 12021

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, LE

SUBJECT: BEIRUT HOLDING ITS BREATH AS CEASEFIRE HOLDS PRECARIOUSLY

REF:(A) BEIRUT 11955; NOTAL (B) BEIRUT 11964;
(C) BEIRUT 11966 NOTAL

1. SUMMARY: LEVEL OF FIGHTING IN BIERUT CONTINUES TO DROP, BUT CEASEFIRE IS BY NO MEAN FULL EFFECTIVE YET. ARMY/MAY ASSIST INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES IN CAPITAL AND IS ASSUMING SECURITY TASK IN BEKAA VALLEY TO RELIEVE INTERNAL SECURITY PERSONNEL FOR USE IN BEIRUT. POLITICAL FRONT IS IN IDLING GEAR PENDING SECOND SESSION OF "NATIONAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE" ON MONDAY. FOOD IS MORE PLENTIFUL. FUEL DISTRIBUTION IS A MAJOR PROBLEM. ALL AMCITS BELIEVED TO BE SAFE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE DECLINE IN LEVEL OF BEIRUT FIGHTING NOTED YESTERDAY CONTINUES. NIGHT OF SEPT 25-26 WITNESSED FURTHER SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT THOUGH BY NO MEANS FULL CEASEFIRE. HOPE RISING THAT ROUND 4 IS GRADUALLY SPUTTERING OUT. BUT THIS OPTIMISM TINGED WITH SKEPTICISM AMONG OBSERVERS WHO HAVE SEEN HOPES DASHED BEFORE.

3. AS OF 1200 HOURS (LOCAL) SEPT 26, MORE SHOPS OPEN THAN IN PREVIOUS DAYS AND TRAFFIC UP SLIGHTLY. AIRPORT ROAD OPEN WITH MODERATE TR9469?*. HOWEVER, SNIPER ACTIVITY CONTINUES, AND RECENT GEOGRAPHIC ESCALATION OF SHOOTING TO RAS BEIRUT AND NEIGHBORING QUARTERS IS STILL EVIDENT AS ISOLATED INCIDENTS OCCUR THERE EVEN IN DAYTIME. INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES ALSO EXPRESSING CONCERN AT CONTINUANCE OF BARRICADES IN SEVERAL AREAS MANNED BY PRIVATE MILITIAS. ANY ONE OF THESE COULD BE SCENE OF INCIDENT. PHALANGISTS, IN PARTICULAR, HAVE NOT LEFT STRONGPOINTS OR TURNED THEM OVER TO SECURITY FORCES, AS SEPT 24 CEASEFIRE STIPULATED. ONE PROBLEM HERE IS SHORTAGE OF SECURITY PERSONNEL TO TAKE OVER POSITIONS.

4. TO HELP ALLEVIATE THIS SHORTAGE, GOVT ANNOUNCED LATE
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SEPT 25 TWO NEW MEASURES TO WHICH INTMIN CHAMOUN AND PRIMIN KARAME AGREED JOINTLY: (A) ARMY WOULD TAKE OVER MAIN SECURITY TASK IN ZAHLE AND ELSEWHERE IN BEKAA VALLEY. THOUGH RENEWED TENSION REPORTED FROM THAT AREA IN RECENT DAYS, THIS STEP APPARENTLY MOTIVATED MAINLY BY NEED TO FREE INTERNAL SECURITY PERSONNEL FOR USE IN BEIRUT. (B) ARMY PERSONNEL WOULD SUPPORT INTERNAL SECURITY UNITS IN COMMERCIAL SECTIONS OF BEIRUT. (WE UNDERSTAND LATTER MEASURES)

SURE NOT CERTAIN. FORMER ALREADY IMPLEMENTED). AC-COMPANYING THIS ANNOUNCEMENT WAS TOUGH SHOOT-ON-SIGHT ORDER TO INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES AGAINST ANYONE SEEN FIRING WEAPON ON STREETS.

5. POLITICAL FRONT IS IN IDLING GEAR UNTIL SECOND SESSION OF "NATIONAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE" NEXT MONDAY. EVERYONE HOLDING BREATH TO SEE IF CEASEFIRE HOLDS THAT LONG. COMMITTEE'S FIRST SESSION YESTERDAY (SEE REF C) WAS PLAYED UP IN PRESS SEPT 26 AS SUCCESS. HOWEVER, WIDE GAP WAS OBVIOUS BETWEEN JUMBLATT AND GEMAYEL ON LEBANESE CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM. JUMBLATT CAME WELL PREPARED WITH SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR RADICALLY REFORM NG SYSTEM (ESSENTIALLY HIS PROGRAM PUBLICIZED MID-AUG; SEE BEIRUT 11197 NOTAL). GEMAYEL HAD NOTHING SO CONCRETE TO OJ \$*, BUT TOOK STAND IN FAVOR OF PRESERVING LEBANESE FORMULA, THOUGH HE DID NOT RULE OUT CHANGE ALTOGETHER. HE ALSO SAID THAT A COMMUNIST OR SOCIALIST LEBUNON WAS NOT ACCEPTABLE AND STRESSED CHRISTIAN FEARS. ATTEMPTING TO BRIDGE GAP, DR. ELIAS SABA NOTED ALL WERE AGREED ON WISH TO KEEP LEBANON'S COEXISTENCE SYSTEM, AND ALL AGREED ON AT LEAST SOME REFORM. STATEMENT ISSUED AFTER MEETING (REF C) REFLECTED THIS LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR. AT MONDAY'S SESSION, MEMBERS ARE SUPPOSED TO PRESENT CONCRETE IDEAS. SPANNING THE JUMBLATT-GEMAYEL CHASM WILL BE TOUGH FEAT.

6. PARLIAMENTARY GATHERING CALLED BY SPEAKER KAMEL AL-ASSAD (REF C) PROVED A BUST. FEW DEPUTIES SHOWED UP AND DISCUSSION ON THE "NATIONAL SITUATION" WAS NOT INSPIRING. APPARENTLY, ASSAD CONVENED DEPUTIES NOT ONLY BECAUSE HE BELIEVED "DIALOGUE" GROUP IMPLICITLY BELITTLED PARLIAMENT, BUT ALSO BECAUSE HE KNEW KARAME WOULD CHAIR

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SEP 25 "DIALOGUE" EVEN THOUGH SPEAKER RANKS HIGHER IN PROTOCOL. IN ANY CASE, ASSAD'S ATTEMPT TO RAISE PRESTIGE OF PARLIAMENT PROBABLY HAD PRECISELY OPPOSITE EFFECT.

7. FOOD IN MORE PLENTIFUL, BUT PRICES REMAIN ABOVE NORMAL. SOLDIERS ACCOMPANY GRAIN DELIVER ES, AND MILITARY CONVOYS OF FUEL TRUCKS HAVE PROVISIONED BAKERIES AND HOSPITALS IN BIERUT. TWO TRAINS FROM MEDRECO REFINERY NEAR SIDON YESTERDAY BROUGHT FUEL OIL FOR POWER GENERATING STATIONS IN BEIRUT AREA. OIL MINSTER TUENI IS TRYING TO ARRANGE FOR ARMY TO GUARD TRAINS TO ASSURE CONTINUED SUPPLY. TWO TANKER SHIPS WITH BUTANE AND GASOLINE ARE OFF SHORE WAITING TO UNLOAD AT MOBIL DEPORT AT DORA, NORTH OF BEIRUT. IF TANKER TRUCK DRIVERS CAN BE CONVINCED TO CROSS CONFESSIONAL LINES, THE DISTRIBUTION OF GASOLINE TO RETAIL

DEALERS CAN BEGIN TOMORROW. THE GOVT IS CONSIDERING GAS-
OLINE RATIONING PROGRAM BASED ON ODD EVEN LICENSE PLATE
NUMBERS. SUPPLY OF COOKING GAS MAY REMAIN A PROBLEM FOR
SOME TIME BECAUSE FACILITIES FOR FILLING TANKS HAVE BEEN
DAMAGED OR DESTROYED. AIRPORT STOCKS OF JET FUEL ARE
STILL LOW, BUT RESUPPLY THROUGH THIRD TANKER SHIP ALSO
OFF DORA BEING DELAYED SINCE MOST AIRCRAFT ARRIVING WITH
FUEL FOR ONWARD FLIGHT. IN GENERAL, AIRLINES ARE
OPERATING NORMALLY DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS.

8. TO THE BEST OF EMBASSY KNOWLEDGE, ALL AMCITS ARE
SAFE (APART FROM MAN INJURED YESTERDAY; SEE REF B),
THOUGH SOME RELOCATION INTO LOCAL HOTELS HAS BEEN
NECESSARY. SCHOOL BOARD HAS DECIDED TO OPEN AMERICAN
COMMUNITY SCHOOL ON SCHEDULE MON, SEPT 29 UNLESS
WEEKEND EVENTS WARRANT LAST-MINUTE RECONSIDERATION.
GODLEY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMISTICE, CIVIL DISORDERS, PROGRESS REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 SEP 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BEIRUT12021
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750334-0934
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750912/aaaaakan.tel
Line Count: 186
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BEIRUT 11955
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags: ANOMALY
Review Date: 28 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 MAY 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <29 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BEIRUT HOLDING ITS BREATH AS CEASFIRE HOLDS PRECARIOUSLY
TAGS: PINT, PINS, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006